

Navy Medicine Oral History Project
Oral History Interview Synopsis and Key Words
James J. Ware, Captain, DC, USN

Date and Location of Interviews:

Session 1: 17 May 2010 aboard the USNS *Comfort*, Baltimore, MD.

Interviewers: Mr. Jan K. Herman, Senior Historian, Office of Medical History, Bureau of Medicine and Surgery, (BUMED), Department of the Navy, and Lisa Budreau, Ph.D., Historian, Office of the Medical History, BUMED

Session 2: 21 June 2011, Bureau of Medicine and Surgery, USN, Washington, D.C.

Interviewers: Jan K. Herman, Senior Historian, and André Sobocinski, Deputy Historian, Office of Medical History, BUMED; and LCDR Karen M. Stokes, DC, USN, BUMED

SYNOPSIS

Bombing of the Marine Corps Barracks, Beirut, October 1983

The Commission concludes that the speed with which the on-scene U.S. military personnel reacted to rescue their comrades trapped in the devastated building and to render medical care was nothing short of heroic. Long Commission Report, p. 138.

In 1983, then Lieutenant James Ware, DC, USN, a native of Savannah, Georgia and a graduate of the dental school of the Medical College of Georgia, was one of three medical officers who deployed with the 24th Marine Amphibious Unit from Camp Lejeune, North Carolina to the Beirut International Airport, Lebanon. He describes his responsibility for ensuring the pre-deployment establishment of complete dental records for all members of the MAU; this would later prove most important. On October 23d, a suicide bomber blew up their headquarters and barracks building with the equivalent of 12,000 pounds of TNT, killing 241 service members, including one of the medical officers, LT John Hudson, MC. The force of the explosion lifted the entire four story building off its foundation.

LT Ware and his fellow dentist, LT Gil Bigelow, faced an extraordinary challenge as they orchestrated the medical response to this disaster, for which they were later awarded the Bronze Star. While some casualties survived the attack, the overwhelming task was recovering the large number of KIAs. Ware's primary mission became the identification of the remains, in which the dental records he had updated for the Marines prior to their deployment were essential.

He recalls this experience as a "sad moment" that "changes your life", and recounts a poignant meeting with LT Hudson's widow in which he described how he identified her husband's body. Ware estimates he has lectured 10,000 members of medical military groups on the psychological impact of a mass casualty.

Haiti Earthquake, January 2010

In 2008, following a tour in Kuwait as the executive officer of the Expeditionary Medical Facility-Kuwait, CAPT Ware was assigned as the commander of the medical treatment facility aboard the hospital ship USNS *Comfort*. In 2010 the *Comfort* was the keystone of Operation Unified Response, the U.S. humanitarian mission to Haiti following a 7.0 magnitude earthquake on January 12th, and CAPT Ware was faced with another MASCAL, seventeen years after his experience in Beirut. It is estimated that 300,000 people were killed and another 500,000 injured within a twelve mile radius of the Haitian Ministry of Health, and that there were some 3-5,000 amputations. The *Comfort* has a standing requirement to be able to sail within five days of notification. In this instance it sailed within three days, but that "breakneck speed" required rapid resolution of electrical, steam, water, air conditioning and data processing systems, efforts that included cannibalization of air conditioning components from the USNS *Mercy* in San Diego. The *Comfort* sailed from Baltimore on the 16th with some 520 medical personal aboard, a complement that would eventually total about 1,000 personnel, including 18 journalists and photographers.

Within 7 days after the earthquake the *Comfort* was functioning as the primary tertiary care referral center in the area. In Haiti it provided a 100 bed capability that could expand to 250 beds. Ten of the twelve operating rooms on board were operational (one was under repair, and one was held in reserve for staff or military cases). LCDR Daniel D'Aurora, MC, and LCDR Cooper, MC, ran the casualty receiving division, and within 72 hours the ship had received over 500 patients. The pressing need was to return treated patients ashore. CAPT Andy Johnson, MC with CAPT Coleen Gallagher, NC, handled the difficult task of coordinating the patient transfers and plans for follow up care. The *Comfort* treated 650 orthopedic cases, as well as 44 spinal injury and sixteen neurological injury cases. Ninety percent of the Haitian population is under the age of fourteen, and over thirty percent of the patients they treated were children, including NICU cases.

CAPT Ware compared the fourteen day mass casualty situation the *Comfort* faced in Haiti to his experience seventeen years earlier in Beirut, Lebanon. From that experience he predicted

the Haiti mission would reveal if the crew of the *Comfort* had the mettle to function in difficult circumstances. He told the staff it was going to be "an intense moment," but "You have to do your duty. You have to take care of each other and you have to get on with it."

KEY WORDS

Bombing of Marine Corps barracks in Beirut, 1983
Haiti earthquake 2010
Navy Medicine
Navy Dental Corps
Operation Continuing Promise
Operation Unified Response
USNS *Comfort* hospital ship
US humanitarian support Haiti earthquake

GLOSSARY

9/11: Nearly 3,000 people were killed on 9 September 2011 in four coordinated suicide attacks by al Qaeda terrorists using hijacked commercial airliners. Two airliners were flown into the World Trade Center, New York City; a third attacked The Pentagon, Washington, D.C.; and a fourth designated for the U.S. Capitol, crashed into a field near Shanksville, PA after passengers attempted to take control of the plane. Osama bin Laden, the al-Qaeda leader, claimed responsibility for ordering the attack. He was killed by U.S. forces in a raid in Pakistan 2 May 2011.

ADA: American Dental Association

AMSUS: Association of Military Surgeons of the United States, the society of the Federal health agencies

Anderson, Arne, CAPT, MC, USN: pediatrician, Walter Reed National Military Medical Center, Bethesda, MD.

ARG: Amphibious Ready Group: The USS *Bataan* ARG deployed to Haiti as part of Operation Unified Response.

BAS: battalion aid station; a ground combat casualty treatment facility established by the medical platoon of a maneuver battalion; is the first level of casualty care that has a medical officer (physician, physician assistant, or dentist) ; and is responsible for evacuating casualties from the medical collecting points of the maneuver companies to the BAS.

Battle, David J., 1SG, USMC; KIA 23 Oct 1983.

Beirut Barracks Bombing: October 23, 1983; two truck bombs struck buildings housing American and French military in Lebanon as part of the multinational peacekeeping force. The

attack killed 241 American military (including 220 Marines), 58 French military and six civilians. It was the largest single day KIA of Marines since Iwo Jima in WW II.

Bigelow, Gilbert, D.D.S., LT DC: USN 1981-2007; in 2012 in private practice in Hampton, VA.

BLT: battalion landing team

Buzby, Mark H., RADM, USN: Commander, Military Sealift Command, 2009-present.

challenge coin: coin or medallion with an organization's insignia or emblem and carried by members of that organization.

Collins, James C. *Good to Great: Why Some Companies Made the Leap and Others Didn't*, 2001.

Compassion fatigue: considered as a secondary traumatic stress disorder; is characterized by a lessening of compassion, a "burnout", over time by those who work directly with trauma victims.

Continuing Promise: annual humanitarian civil assistance operation conducted by U.S. Southern Command and supported by U.S. and international military medical personnel that provides medical, dental and veterinary assistance to countries in Latin America; Operation Continuing Promise 2007 (CP7) was the first. CP9 was a 120-day humanitarian mission that began in April 2009 in Haiti, and proceeded to the Dominican Republic, Antigua, Colombia, Panama, El Salvador and Nicaragua.

Corps School: Naval Hospital Corps A School, Great Lakes, Illinois, conducts primary training for Navy Enlisted Classification code (NEC) HM-0000 "Quad Zero", Hospital Corpsman. The Great Lakes school closed and relocated in 2011 to the joint service Medical Education and Training Campus (METC), Fort Sam Houston, Texas as part of BRAC 2005.

Corpsman: enlisted Navy Hospital Corpsman: NEC HM-0000 "Quad Zero is awarded upon completion of "A" school primary training at the Naval Hospital Corps School, Advanced C school training is available in a wide variety of specialties at various locations. Corpsmen perform duties as assistants in the prevention and treatment of disease and injury and assist health care professionals in providing medical care to Navy and Marine Corp personnel and their families.

Cowan, Michael L., MC, VADM, USN: Navy Surgeon General 2001-2004

CP7, CP9: Continuing Promise 2007, 2009

CSR: central sterilization room

Cullison, Thomas, R., RADM, MC, USN, Ret.; Deputy Surgeon

General, US Navy, 2007-2010.

D'Aurora, LCDR Daniel, NC: Casualty Receiving Division Officer, USNS *Comfort* 2010.

DART: Disaster Assistance Response Team (DART); rapidly deployable Canadian Forces team.

DFA: Director for Administration; title is equivalent to executive officer

Donahue, CDR Timothy F, MC, Chief of Surgery, USNS *Comfort*; later CAPT, Chief of Urology, WRNMMC, Bethesda, MD.

Dziadon, Paul, HM2: active duty USN 1976-2004, retired HMCO (SW). Currently employed as Deputy Executive Program Manager, Department of Veterans Affairs, Falling Water, WV

EMF-K: Expeditionary Medical Facility-Kuwait; CAPT Ware was the XO, 2007-8.

Farmer, Paul, M.D: an American physician and anthropologist; a founder of Partners in Health

Faison, C. Forrest III, M.D, RADM (Upper Half), USN: Commanding Officer, NMCS, 2010-2013.

Ferris, Robert F., D.O., Senior Treatment Adviser, HIV/AIDS Office, Global Health Bureau, USAID.

Fly, Richard: dental tech

Fontaine, Nicolette, M.D.: Haitian American internist, Boston, MA.; M.D. University of Massachusetts Medical School, 1998.

Food for the Poor, Inc.: ecumenical Christian NGO non-profit NGO based in Coconut Creek, Florida; provides food, medical care and shelter to poor people in Latin America and the Caribbean.

Fourth Fleet: U. S. 4th Fleet, headquartered in Jacksonville, Florida, is a component command of the U.S. Southern Command; the commander of 4th Fleet is dual hated as Commander, U.S. Naval Forces Southern Command.

Gallagher, CAPT Coleen K., NC, USN: family nurse practitioner, Head Nursing Professional Development, NNMC, Bethesda

Georgia Humanitarian Assistance Mission; U.S. response in August 2008 to request from the government of Georgia, a former Soviet republic, for assistance following armed conflict between Russian and Georgian forces

Geraghty, Timothy J., COL, USMC, assumed command of the 24th MAU in Beirut on 17 March 1983.

Gerber, Frederick E., COL, USA, Ret., Operations Officer, Project HOPE

Gettysburg: 1983 film on the pivotal Civil War battle 1-3 July 1863, based on *Killer Angels*, an historical fiction novel by Michael Shaara.

Gitmo: U.S. Naval Station Guantanamo Bay, Cuba; in 1995 Operation Sea Signal was a humanitarian mission to support

mass exodus of Cuban and Haitian migrants; processed over 50,000 refugees. During OEF/OIF: Joint Task Force Guantanamo Bay (JTG-GTMO) established to operate the Guantanamo Detention Camp.

Gupta, Sanjay, M.D: CNN medical correspondent and neurosurgeon; assistant professor of neurosurgery, Emory University Medical School and Associate Chief of Neurosurgery, Grady Memorial Medical Center, Atlanta, GA. In 2010, while reporting on the earthquake in Haiti, was requested to perform neurosurgery on an earthquake victim onboard the USS *Vinson*.

Haiti Earthquake: catastrophic magnitude 7.0 earthquake 12 January 2010 displaced an estimated 1.5 million people; estimates of number killed ranged from 90-316 thousand.

Hancock, CDR Michelle, NC, USN, SOUTHCOM Medical Plans section
Harvey, John C., ADM; Commander, Fleet Forces Command

Hawley, Robert: Master of Ship, USNS *Comfort*, during Haiti relief operations 2010

HCA: humanitarian and civic assistance

Hudson, John, M.D., LT, MC

Isabelle: "Baby Isabelle", premature baby who survived in the face of great odds.

Johnson, Andrew S, CAPT, MC: Head, Emergency Medicine Department, Naval Medical Center, Portsmouth, VA.

Larsen, Alex, M.D. Minister of Health, Haiti.

Long, Robert L.J., ADM, USN, Ret., 1920-2002. Active service, 1943-83; VCNO 1977-79; Commander, Pacific Command, 1979-93.

Long Commission: Report of the DoD Commission on Beirut International Airport Terrorism Act October 23, 1983; dated 20 December 1983; Chair: ADM Robert L.J. Long, USN, Ret.

LaRose, Hughes: Haitian artist injured in the Earthquake, and brought aboard the *Comfort*.

Mariners: Civil Service Mariners, Federal government employees who work and sail on U.S. flagged Military Sealift Command vessels; position examples include damage control officer, operations chief, master, etc.

Marino, Mark, CDR, NC: Chief Nurse aboard the *Comfort*.

Mathews, Burnham K, Lance Corporal; USMC 1981-2005, retired as Master Sergeant; attended Beirut bombing memorial service in 2004.

MAU: Marine amphibious unit; later called a Marine expeditionary unit (MEU), the smallest Marine combined arms force; consists of a reinforced infantry battalion, a composite helicopter squadron, and a logistics combat element (LCE); totals about 2,200 Marines, commanded by a colonel.

MEDEVAC: medical evacuation

MOU: memorandum of understanding

MSC: Military Sealift Command. Also, US Navy Medical Service Corps and US Army Medical Service Corps.

MSSG: MAU Service Support Group

MTF: medical treatment facility

Negus, Thomas, CAPT, USN: Commander, U.S. Navy Amphibious Relief Operations - Haiti during Operation Unified Response; in 2012 Chief of Staff, Expeditionary Strike Group Two, Norfolk, VA.

NGO: non-governmental organizations; in this case those that provided disaster relief in Haiti, e.g. Project HOPE

Olivero, Thomas, LCDR, NC: Operating Room Nurse

Operation Unified Response: Humanitarian relief operation conducted by Joint Task Force Haiti of the U.S. Southern Command following the 2010 earthquake in Haiti:

Orthopedic Trauma Association: Rosemont, Illinois, membership open to board certified orthopedic surgeons.

Pagliara-Miller, Claire, R.N., Ph.D., CAPT, NC, USN, Ret

PAHO: Pan-American Health Organization: international public health agency and Americas regional office of the World Health Organization, an agency of the United Nations

Panorex: panoramic scanning radiograph for panoramic scanning dental x-ray of the upper and lower jaw.

Partners in Health: a non-profit health organization organized to provide "a preferential treatment option for the poor" with an emphasis on preventive care.

Powell, Clydette L., M.D., pediatric neurologist; Medical Officer, Bureau for Global Health, US USAID

Project HOPE (Health Opportunities for People Everywhere): an international health organization.

River City: code words for implementing immediate communications blackout until further notice

ROS: Reduced Operating Status

Sacred Heart: Hopital Sacre Coeur, 120 bed hospital in Milot, Haiti

Shaffer, Richard G., RADM, DC; 1934-1989. In 1983, Chief, USN Dental Corps; in 1984, Commander, Naval Medical Command, National Capital Region; Retired 1989.

Sharpe, Richard P., CAPT, MC; Surgeon, Naval Medical Center Portsmouth, VA. Head of Surgery, USNS *Comfort* in Haiti

Ship's Master: Civil Service mariner who is in charge of all aspects of a ship's operation while at sea and in port; alternate name is captain, or ship's captain. Robert Hawley was Master of the *Comfort* during the mission in Haiti.

Southern Command: U.S. Southern Command, a unified combatant command headquartered in Miami, Florida.

SPRINT Team: Special Psychiatric Rapid Intervention Team
Sternberg, Steve: reporter, *USA Today*; later, *U.S. News and World Report*.

Stockinger, Zsolt T., CAPT, MC: Surgical Director, Intensive Care Units, Naval Medical Center, Portsmouth, VA.

Surch, James F., Jr., LT, USN: KIA 23 October 1987
Timboe, Harold L. Timboe, M.D., MG, USA, Ret., was designated the Project HOPE chief medical officer for the Haiti mission. After his Army retirement, from 2002 to 2008 he was Vice President for Administration and later Associate Vice President for Research, University of Texas Health Science Center, San Antonio, TX.

USAID: United States Agency for International Development, the U.S. agency primarily responsible for administering civilian foreign aid; technically an independent agency, its administrator works under the direct authority and foreign policy guidance of the Secretary of State

USNS *Comfort* (T-AH-20) *Mercy* class Hospital Ship; is a non-commissioned ship owned by the Navy, launched 1 February 1976, in service USN 1 December 1987. The *Comfort* is maintained in an inactive Reduced Operating Status (ROS) 5 by the Military Sealift Command with a small cadre crew aboard to ensure the readiness of propulsion and other systems needed to activate the ship. ROS-5 indicates it will take five days to make the ship ready to sail, fully crewed, and operational. The master of the ship is a Military Sealift Command civilian mariner who is responsible for the safe operation of the ship and its navigation. The medical treatment facility, which is the bulk of the ship, has naval officers as the commander and the executive officer. The commanding officer is responsible for the operation of the hospital and care of the patients.

USNS *Mercy* (T-AH-19): hospital ship based in San Diego, California, sister ship to the USNS *Comfort*. USNS; a non-commissioned ship owned by the Navy; launched 1 June 1975, in service USN 8 November 1986. Departed San Diego on 5 January 2005 following the Banda Acha, Indonesia Tsunami 26 December 2004, as part of Operation Unified Assistance; commenced humanitarian assistance operations 5 February 2005, 39 days after the tsunami.

TQ: Al Taqaddum Air Base, located about 74 KM west of Baghdad
USS *Carl Vinson*, CVN 70: Nimitz class nuclear aircraft carrier, commissioned 13 March 1982

USNS *Comfort* (T-AH-20) *Mercy* class hospital ship; a non-commissioned ship owned by the Navy; launched 1 February

1976, in service USN 1 December 1987. The *Comfort* departed Baltimore 16 January and began receiving patients by helicopter on the 19th as it neared Haiti. It anchored off the coast of Haiti on Wednesday the 20th.

USO: United Service Organization, an NGO that provides programs, services and entertainment to U.S. service members

USS *Austin* (LPD-4): amphibious transport dock ship, commissioned 6 February 1965, decommissioned 27 September 2006.

USS *Iwo Jima* (LPH-2): amphibious assault ship commissioned 26 August 1961; decommissioned 24 September 1993,

WHO: World Health Organization, a specialized United Nations organization for international public health; established in 1948 with headquarters in Geneva, Switzerland.

Wood, Brian A., HMC (SW/FMF); LPO Combat Cargo and Medical Operations, USNS *Comfort*.

Expressions

Put on report: Placing a person on report (starting a charge against the individual) is letting the proper authority know about an apparent misconduct. Notification can be oral or in the form of a written report "chit."

R. Ginn 2/3/13